

1999 Session of the Indiana General Assembly

State budget provides tax cuts, funding for education

The new state budget will make a very real difference in the lives of many Hoosiers. Some of the highlights include:

Program Funding

- Public education: Statewide total formula funding increase of an average of 4.7 percent in calendar years 2000 and 2001, with minimum guarantees of funding increases of at least 2.5%. Funding was increased for both at-risk and academic honors programs. Local schools and libraries also received \$76 million in technology funding.
- CHOICE: \$5 million increase per year in funding for home health care for the elderly
- Higher Education: appropriations were increased by 7.0 percent in fiscal year 2000 and 4.7 percent in 2001
- Vocational education: incentives for school corporations to provide programs in which high employment demand exists



Rep. Weinzapfel with Governor Frank O'Bannon

- A new \$50 million 21st Century Research and Technology Fund that will promote high-tech industries located in Indiana
- Social Services: Funding for the seriously mentally ill is increased by \$3 million in 2000 and \$6 million in 2001. MRDD programs will receive an additional \$9 million in funding.

Hoosiers will save \$672 million over next two years in tax cuts

- Homeowners: a new income tax deduction for property taxes up to \$2500
- Senior citizens: an increase in the income tax deduction from \$1000 to \$1500 and an increase in the property tax deduction for seniors from \$1000 to \$2000
- Small Businesses and Farmers: property tax "add-back" repealed so farmers and business owners can deduct the amount of their property taxes from their state income taxes
- Dependent children: an increase in the income tax deduction from \$1000 to \$2500
- Elimination of inventory tax for 87 percent of farms and businesses
- Elimination of county welfare fund and county welfare administration funds from local property taxes
- Renters: increased the income tax deduction from \$1500 to \$2000

Additional \$200 million approved for Indiana roads

I was pleased we appropriated an additional \$200 million from the state general fund for local roads over the next two years. This is in addition to the regular funding from gas taxes.

The amounts listed for each city are in addition to the total for the county. The amount appropriated to each city is based on the city's population.

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| Posey County | \$724,929 |
| Cynthiana | \$9,536 |
| Mount Vernon | \$83,471 |
| New Harmony | \$11,589 |
| Poseyville | \$14,976 |

Weinzapfel authors child labor reform bill

I was very pleased that legislation I authored to enact the first major reforms in Indiana child labor law in a decade has been signed by the Governor.

The legislation will require employers to have parental consent in order to allow 16- and 17-year olds to work more than 30 hours a week during the school year.

The legislation also clarifies state statutes covering how late 17-year olds can work in evenings during the school year. These teenagers will not be allowed to work later than 10 p.m. on school nights without receiving written permission from their parents.

Fines will be significantly increased for employers who violate the law. Money collected from these fines will be used to hire additional child labor inspectors and educate employers and teenagers about child labor laws.

With the changes incorporated in this bill, we hope to strike a balance between the desire of teenagers to pursue a job and make money with



Rep. Weinzapfel speaks in a committee meeting.

the need for them to maintain excellence in the classroom and make themselves more attractive to future employers.

The need for changing child labor laws has become more apparent as the numbers of young people who wish to find a job continues to rise. In 1999 alone, it is expected that up to 135,000 teenagers will apply for a work permit.

Build Indiana Projects
Posey County

- Town of New Harmony
Wabash River erosion control
Sewer improvements
\$300,000
- City of Mount Vernon
Expansion of Mt. Vernon Sr. Citizen's Center
\$180,000
- Town of Poseyville
Renovation of new community center
\$70,000
- Marrs Township Volunteer Fire Department
Purchase of new medical / rescue truck
\$60,000
- Private Industry Council of Southwestern IN
Capital for social service projects
\$100,000
- Smith Township Volunteer Fire Department
Purchase of equipment
\$20,000
- Southern Maritime Center
Road / rail / infrastructure improvements
\$2,710,000
- University of Southern Indiana
 - Support of historic sites in New Harmony
\$400,000
 - Science Education Building
\$12,600,000
 - Wellness & Fitness Center
\$4,200,000

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Rep. Weinzapfel fights proposal to close Poseyville License Branch

I want to thank all of you who contacted my office to express your concerns about the Bureau of Motor Vehicle's proposal to close the Poseyville License Branch.

As you are aware, the Commissioner of the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles proposed closing 49 license branch offices statewide expecting to save \$1.8 million annually.

According to this plan, the Poseyville License Branch would have been shut down in November 2002 to generate an estimated annual savings of \$21,000. The Commissioner believes that by promoting greater use of the U.S. Postal Service and the internet to provide its services, the need for branch offices will significantly decrease.

I support the Commissioner's proposal to encourage greater use of the internet and the U.S. mail. However, I believe that two license branches are necessary in Posey County to adequately serve its 25,000 residents. The expected savings are not worth the longer lines, greater inefficiency and increased inconvenience this proposal would cause.

Governor Frank O'Bannon refused to endorse this proposal during the legislative session. There was great sentiment across the state to prevent these 49 license branches from closing and the proposal has apparently been taken off the table for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, I will continue to monitor the situation and work to ensure that the Poseyville License Branch remains open.

Department of Health will examine cancer rate

The Indiana State Department of Health has agreed to examine the seemingly high cancer rates in southwestern Indiana.

I asked the commissioner of the health department in early April to consider the study and I am pleased he is acting quickly on the matter.

There has been growing concern in our area about deaths from cancer, whether the risk of obtaining cancer is greater than other areas of the state or nation, and possible environmental concerns or lifestyle choices which may contribute to an allegedly high cancer rate. I believe people need as much information as possible so that they can make the best possible decisions for themselves and their families.

While cancer rates are falling everywhere, the rates for southwestern Indiana appear to remain alarmingly higher than those in other areas. I am interested in determining whether this is true and then eventually examining possible reasons and explanations.

The department of health will provide assistance in obtaining detailed, historical data on cancer rates in Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh and Warrick counties. The study will focus on 1960 to the present.

I am eager to learn the initial results and I will keep you informed in future newsletters about the progress of the studies.

House publications available

The following publications can be requested free of charge from my Statehouse office by calling toll-free 1-800-382-9842:

Relax . . . -- This informational booklet for senior citizens discusses a variety of issues, from taxes to health problems to leisure activities.

Higher Education -- A 24-page publication for those interested in pursuing a higher education degree, detailing many Indiana colleges and universities as well as occupational and vocational schools.

Guide to State Agencies -- This booklet details various agencies within Indiana state government, listing phone numbers, functions and general areas of responsibility for each of the state agencies.

Hoosier Fun and Facts -- Designed for elementary school-aged children, this information and activity book teaches students about their state through a combination of text, puzzles and other educational activities.

Is the address label on this mailing correct?

Please check the address label on this mailing for accuracy. If there are any errors or if you are receiving duplicate mailings, please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842. Every effort will be made to correct the mistake.

I appreciate your assistance in keeping the mailing list updated. This will ultimately result in more efficient delivery and substantial savings to taxpayers across the state.

Legislature passes variety of education issues

ISTEP Gateway Examination -- House Enrolled Act 1050 allows students who do not pass the ISTEP Gateway Examination to graduate, provided they meet certain other requirements. The legislation also provides that the case conference committee determines eligibility for graduation of certain students with disabilities. The Act also provides that all students in Grade 10 must take the examination.

Educational Standards -- A roundtable has been created to develop education standards for Indiana students. The legislation will set standards for each grade level, easily comparable to national and international standards, written in an easy-to-understand manner, and distributed to students and parents.

Postsecondary Proprietary Education Grants -- Combines the higher education award program for students at postsecondary proprietary educational institutions with the award program for students at other institutions of higher learning.